

STUDY GUIDE

AN INSPIRING
COLLECTION OF
ESSAYS ABOUT

God and Satan,
Heaven and Hell,
Morality and Justice,
Life after Death
and more

A
Window
INTO
My Soul

by Larry Southwick

STUDY GUIDE

A WINDOW INTO MY SOUL

By Larry Southwick

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A WINDOW INTO MY SOUL / *A STUDY GUIDE*

INTRODUCTION

I hope you enjoy reading and thinking about these ideas as you look through the window into my soul. The initial purpose was to share my own thoughts about my faith. Now, the purpose is to encourage you, the reader, to explore your own thoughts about these elements of our lives. There are some thoughts at the ends of each essay that I ask you to consider. This *Study Guide* is an expansion on those considerations. The focus is on questions that will help you to think about your own understanding of these ideas.

What do you know? How do you know it? What's it based on? Is it certain, speculation or opinion? Are you open to considerations of other ideas?

This can be done alone or in discussion groups. The benefit of discussion groups is for sharing of ideas that may enlighten and expand your own understanding. As they say, two minds are better than one. Discussion groups also give you a forum to better understand your own ideas by having to explain them. And it exposes you to others' ideas that may clarify or improve your own understanding. I recommend that groups be limited in size, perhaps no more than ten, in order to assure that each member can actively participate in the discussion.

I suspect that this is largely 'preaching to the choir.' Likely, most readers that are willing to dig into their own understanding of these ideas are already well along in their faith journey. For those with more questions than answers, I hope that encouraging your thinking by asking these questions will lead you to faith or at least a better understanding of it.

This *Study Guide* is intended to provide a place for you to write out your own thoughts with regard to these questions. Writing them down is a good tool to help you to give it serious consideration. Just add more loose leaf paper as needed. You can also add to it from other sources as you desire such as clips from the internet or notes from other books. The more of your time and effort thinking about them, the better your understanding will be as a basis for your choices in the future.

The ultimate purpose of *A Window Into My Soul* and this *Study Guide* is to increase your understanding of God, heaven and hell, and what you may be able to do to improve your own outcome after death. God's purpose for you is eternal joy and peace in heaven. Hopefully this is a tool that will help you attain that goal. As I wrote in the book, may God bless you with insight and inspiration.

I've added a Survey at the end of this *Study Guide* for you to measure your faith. I encourage you to check off this survey before reading, *A Window Into My Soul*, after reading the book and at different times after you've reconsidered or developed your faith.

CHAPTER 1 – THE BIG PICTURE

In order to look at the ‘big picture’ of life, we need to open our minds to the past, present and future, from before man’s existence to what happens after death and everything in between. This is my view and I ask you to think about your own perceptions about how it all fits together.

In my view, God and the angels existed in a spiritual world before the ‘big bang’ and the creation of the universe. God created the angels with an intellect and free will so they could know and love God in return through their own free will. Lucifer was one of the most intelligent and powerful angels who turned against God out of pride and selfishness and was banished to hell. Before that, hell didn’t exist; it was all what we now think of as heaven.

Somehow, before the ‘big bang,’ God created the energy and the resources for the entire universe and put it into motion. He used evolution for the process over billions of years, creating the basis for life and its development on earth. He guided the earth’s development into an environment that would become the home for his people. In due time, he created human life of man and woman, like the angels with an intellect and free will but with a physical, temporal body. Lucifer, now Satan or the devil, intervened and the newly created humans chose to follow his temptations, introducing sin to our world.

God created us with a very complex life; physical, intellectual and spiritual all in one. Our physical body is temporal and will die while our spiritual life will endure past death into eternal life because we can’t die again. Our intellect and memories will endure in our spiritual life. Depending on the things we’ve done and the choices we’ve made, our spiritual life will endure in heaven with God, in purgatory in preparation for life in heaven, or in hell with Satan and his evil followers.

Heaven, purgatory and hell exist in the spiritual world and, to the extent that we also live in a spiritual realm, life takes on some of the same characteristics – love, joy and peace as in heaven; the pain and suffering of purgatory; and some experience the effects of hell by their own choices. We are just a short step away through the doorway of death to a place in the spiritual world corresponding to where we are at the time of our death.

We determine where we will be after death by the choices we make and the life that we live. I believe that most of us will go to purgatory on the way to heaven as compared to condemnation to hell where the evil ones will go. Purgatory is the place for atonement for our shortcomings, sins and offenses. It’s also the place for preparation for heaven; we must be purified and holy for entrance into heaven. The condition and length of atonement and preparation depends on the state of our life at the time of death. Some will have lived a good enough life and completed their atonement and preparation for heaven throughout their lives in order to go straight to heaven.

We can prepare ourselves for an easier, quicker passage through purgatory by the things we do before death. We can improve our faith and relationship with God. We can increase the virtues and decrease the vices in our lives. We can make amends for our shortcomings. I think the main element is to increase the love in our lives; love for God and for one another.

I LOVE YOU, PLEASE TALK WITH ME: If you believe that God has been a real part in your own life, that he is always present and listening, do you talk with him? Why or why not? How?

KNOCK, KNOCK: What's your feeling of talking about religion? Some are very open and willing to talk and others completely avoid the subject. Why can't we just have a normal conversation about it?

WHO IS YOUR GOD? What do you experience about the existence of God? What are your daily and life goals, actions, and thoughts? Where are they leading you? Are they false gods?

THE BIG PICTURE: What is your moral code? Is it a set of rules imposed by society or something inherent within you? Are God and Satan, heaven and hell a part of that basis?

WHY SHOULD YOU BELIEVE? What do you believe? Why? Even believers sometimes choose to avoid God and his call to faith. What would it take to increase your faith?

<http://science.nasa.gov/astrophysics/focus-areas/what-powered-the-big-bang/>

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue or grey ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are approximately 20 lines visible. The paper has a slight shadow on the right side, suggesting it's resting on a surface.

CHAPTER 2 – TRUTH AND FAITH

The whole purpose of the book, *A Window Into My Soul*, and this *Study Guide* is to better understand these ideas about the fundamentals of faith in God. The presumption is that it's based on the truth. It certainly is the closest that I can come after many years of study, development and consideration on my part. So I convey this for your consideration.

I'm quite certain about the ideas and principals that are presented here. That doesn't mean that I know everything or that I can't be wrong. As I take issue with these ideas, I want you to consider your own understanding of them, independent from my statements. Take this opportunity to make it your own statement of faith.

The fundamental question is: what are knowledge and truth when compared to ideas that don't agree? Can knowledge be perfect and true? If so, how and why? How do we determine what is correct/true?

Part of my answer is that only God is perfect and that his knowledge is the source of truth. But we are human and far short of that level of knowledge. We can only approach God's knowledge as his gift without which we will be at fault. That leaves our knowledge as susceptible, incomplete and uncertain. So, our goal is to seek the highest level of knowledge and confidence in the truth while knowing that it won't and can't be perfect.

The other part is that knowledge and truth are either objective or subjective. Objective knowledge and truth should be obvious to all based on the observations and facts. We should all reach the same conclusion but we still don't because we're not obliged to; we still have free choice to disagree even with objective proof. Subjective knowledge and truth is really up to each individual to learn and choose as they best see fit. Each one can determine their own level of knowledge as they choose.

So, the question is, do we know about God and related concepts through objective or subjective knowledge and truth? If you don't understand this concept, take some time to explore and learn about it besides what I've said. How does it relate to your own level of knowledge? What's objective versus subjective?

Those with faith in God consider knowledge and faith in God as objective with compelling evidence. Those without faith reject or deny the evidence and subsequently deny God. Can we both be right? Or is that a matter of opinion?

TRUTH: How do you determine the truth? What does it have to be based on? Do you accept the truth as determined by others with more knowledge of the subject? Why or why not?

FAITH: What is your own faith relative to God? Agnostic? Atheistic? Lukewarm? Evangelical? God exists, but I'm not interested? Moderate or high level of faith? What do you base your faith or lack of it upon?

BRAINWASHING? Is this whole thing about faith in God and his son Jesus Christ, heaven and hell, just a big hoax? Why is it then based on doing so many good things for the benefit of humanity and for your own salvation?

Other resources to consider:

Compendium, Catechism of the Catholic Church. Washington, D.C.: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2006.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Objectivity_\(philosophy\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Objectivity_(philosophy))

<http://fallibleideas.com/objective-truth>

<http://atheism.about.com/od/philosophyepistemology/a/ObjectiveTruth.htm>

CHAPTER 3 – EVOLUTION

To follow the above line of thinking regarding objective versus subjective knowledge, evolution is an objective theory explaining the origin of the universe and all the rest of creation while the biblical description in Genesis is a subjective version. While I firmly believe that God created the universe and humankind, I don't believe in the literal description in Genesis as the way that it happened. The compelling evidence just doesn't support it as written.

But I also believe that there is compelling, objective evidence for the knowledge that God did in fact create the universe. While we may agree on the evidence, we just don't all accept the conclusion drawn from it; i.e. God. That's where we diverge into faith in God or reject it.

To get to the truth, we have to study the evidence and evaluate the explanations for both sides. We need to use all of the powers of our intellect which includes deductive reasoning. Scientists use it all the time to reach their theories. They infer great details of knowledge based on thorough evaluation of very limited physical evidence. They try to fully explain the origin of humans based on the physical remains found in different areas around the world. They fill in the gaps of physical evidence with their own line of deductive reasoning.

On the other hand, equally certain scientists use their knowledge and reasoning to explain the gaps in physical knowledge with explanations that include the role of God in all of creation. That's where our faith comes from and it's based on real knowledge, not just conjecture.

So, now I encourage you to do some study about the origin of human beings. How did we come about? How did we get our human nature? How does that fit within the process of evolution?

Here's an exercise that I like. Close your eyes and use your mind's eye to see what it was like in the life of the very first human being. Was it a man or woman? How old was he/she? What was his/her life like? Presumably, he/she was the only human being in order to be the first one. How could that be? Didn't he/she have parents? Siblings? If he/she was the first one, where/how did the second human being come about? Etc. Think about it and what do you come up with? Could it have happened as a mere accident or coincidence of nature? Or was there a guiding power with a plan for how it came about?

That makes me think about the lyrics of a song in the Sound of Music, *Something Good*, where Julie Andrews and Christopher Plummer sing, "Nothing comes from nothing; nothing ever could." If human beings didn't come from nothing, what did they come from?

[illegible]

CHAPTER 4 – GOD

Assuming that you find the evidence compelling that some kind of God exists, how can we know more about him or her or it? Is God just an immaterial force or source of energy of nature? Or rather Mother Nature? That wouldn't be an adequate explanation for what we see.

We can know a great deal about God by deductive reasoning from what we see in his creation. But first, we have to be open to the reasoning. That's a matter of choice; we can choose to be closed to the possibilities. That's mostly what I encounter; resistance to even considering the possibilities. Once the door is opened to the possibilities, one can't deny the logical outcome. So better to just keep that door closed.

But if the rest of the evidence indicates things like life after death, heaven and hell, you would think one would want to know more about those possibilities just out of self-interest. What's best for me? How can I assure a favorable outcome? What's the risk of not being prepared? What could really happen? How bad could it be?

In the book, I've just scratched the surface of what we can know about God, from my own limited point of view. If you're serious about learning more, for example, just take a look at St. Thomas' *Summa Theologica*, <http://dhspriority.org/thomas/summa/>. Every religion has extensive resources to explain God in their own terms. As I say in one essay, God isn't Catholic, nor Muslim, nor Hindu, nor Buddhist. God is universal. Everyone can find God in their own terms.

The other source of knowledge about God is revelation; what God himself has explained to us. The primary source of revelation for Jews and Christians is the Bible. I'm sure that all of the other religions have their own resources of similar nature, some of which I understand they too believe are due to revelation. For some, revelation is the only true source of knowledge of God.

If you're not inclined to plow this ground on your own, you'll find it easier to follow those who've already put in the effort. There is no shortage of resources for that approach. You just have to be open to the process and then pick it up. I hope that this book is beneficial in that regard.

GOD EXPLAINED: How would you describe God? Do you understand him as three persons in one God? How would you describe your relationship to God? Do you think God is personally involved in each of our lives? How?

GOD *IS* LOVE: Think about the need for love in your life. Where does it come from? How can you grow in love? What is standing in the way? How can you get around it?

THE REAL ROYAL FAMILY: Think about the real treasures that you seek. Are they material or spiritual?

THE PARABLE OF THE LOST SHEEP: Are you lost? If so, what's your story? Be assured that God, the good shepherd, is looking for you.

THE WALLS THAT BLIND US: What walls have you built that limit your knowledge of the reality of God? What doors do you want to open? Which do you want to keep closed? Why?

GOD ISN'T CATHOLIC: What do you think about the role of religion in one's life? Do you think one religion is as good as another? What's the real objective?

Other resources to consider:

Bible

Catechism of the Catholic Church. Second ed. Vatican: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1997. Print
Internet search

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

CHAPTER 5 – SATAN

We see the evidence of Satan every day in our lives, on the news and in the world around us. War, murder, violence, abuse, hard crime and white collar crime, infidelity and cheating. The list goes on and on. Why? What are the root causes? Why can't we just all be nice to each other?

I understand the reasons that the secular experts use to explain it – poverty, victims of abuse, disengagement, cultural differences, lack of opportunity, etc. But that doesn't really explain why individuals choose to do harm to others. Some people living in those same impoverished conditions still don't resort to evil. If the reasons are adequate to explain all the bad things in life, why isn't everyone in those same situations evil? How do some rise above it all?

Evil comes from within people, not from without. The external conditions may create the environment for evil but alone don't equate to evil until it's acted upon by individuals. It still comes down to a matter of choice. Some people choose to internalize those factors and act upon them. But others don't. Why?

The real underlying cause is the existence and presence of Satan in our lives. Everyone is exposed to the temptations of Satan and his followers; no one is exempt.

SATAN DEFINED: Do you believe in Satan? Why or why not? How do you describe Satan?

OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH SATAN: How would you describe your relationship with Satan? Where do you see his influence most clearly in your life and in humankind?

EXPLAINING THE BAD THINGS ON THE EVENING NEWS: Do you see a relationship between bad news reports and Satan? If not, how would you explain the reason for them? Why are some people so hateful?

IMMORALITY LEADS TO SUFFERING: How do you see the relationship between Satan, sin, and suffering?

GOOD vs. EVIL = GOD vs. SATAN: How do you see the relationship between good and evil? Do you see God and Satan in these actions? Why or why not?

CONFUSING, FRUSTRATING, AND DEPRAVED: Have you ever felt like you were in the presence of Satan? Describe it, analyze it. What were the consequences?

Other resources to consider:

Bible

Catechism of the Catholic Church. Second ed. Vatican: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1997. Print
Internet research

CHAPTER 6 – SOUL AND SPIRITUAL LIFE

To me, this is the key chapter in all of my thinking. If you don't believe that we have a soul and spiritual life, all the rest doesn't make sense. My hope is to help make sense of it.

Our soul is what makes each and every one of us who we are. We each have our own mind, intellect, knowledge, experience and memories. Everything we think and do comes from within our own being. We are responsible for our thoughts, words and actions. That's a secular description of who we are.

But we are, each and every one, created in the likeness of God, the source of our nature, the father of our soul. He created us with an intellect and free will; we are not predestined or caused to choose. We can choose to be God-like or not. God, the angels and saints live in a spiritual realm around us.

And Satan is just as real and present in the spiritual realm. Satan is the source of temptation and evil in our own lives and the lives of others. His goal is simply to distract us and pull us away from God.

Our soul is where and how all of this happens. Think about your own soul and its spiritual identity. How do you understand it?

If you have a soul, so does everyone else around you. Does that affect how you think about them? Or do you just relate to their physical being? That's what we experience with our senses but we also see something more. Why do they act a particular way? What makes them tick? What are they really like on the inside? Can you see their soul in that way?

And, if our soul lives on after death, then everyone else that has ever lived is still alive in the spiritual realm. Where? What's it like? Are they near or around us? Does that thought affect your own life and choices? Why or why not?

OUR LIFE IN GOD AND GOD IN OUR LIFE: Do you believe each one of us has a spiritual life? Why or why not? If you don't, how do you understand the mental side of our lives? Is it all just a coincidental interchange of biological activities in our brain? How does that explain our intellectual abilities and free will?

SPIRITUAL LIFE: This is a big step in understanding spiritual life. What's the truth? How can you know? How do you understand spiritual life? Why do you agree or disagree with this discussion of spiritual life?

OUR SOUL IS SUBCONSCIOUS: Do these thoughts help you understand your own soul? Do you nurture your soul with good thoughts and actions or do you leave your subconscious open to temptation?

THE MIND'S EYE: When you think of your mind's eye, does it help you understand the human soul? Describe your understanding of your mind's eye. How does it work?

THOUGHTS ON *THE ROAD LESS TRAVELED*: How do you understand your own conscious and unconscious mind? Is it spiritual in nature? What could you do to improve it? If you are interested, you may want to read *The Road Less Traveled*, especially Section IV on Grace.

FREE WILL: What decisions have you made about your lifestyle relative to God that you would not change? What kind of argument or evidence would it take for you to consider a change? What would you do if you were to consider a change?

THE GOOD NEWS AND THE BAD NEWS: If you don't believe in God and life after death, how hard would it be for you to change your mind? You have a free will to make a change if you choose, now or later. What would it take to convince you to change?

SPIRITUAL LIFE AROUND US: Where are you on the spectrum of spiritual life – complete belief to complete disbelief, or somewhere in between? What do you really believe in? Are you ready for judgment based on your belief?

YOUR INTELLECT AND WILL: How do you see your intellectual relationship with God? How do you see that will play out in life after death? How does your will interact with your intellect? Do you make up your mind before you fully engage your intellect to consider the evidence?

INTELLECT OR EMOTION? If you don't believe in God, would it take intellectual or emotional means to open your consideration of God? If you believe in God, what brought you to that faith; intellectual or emotional or other appeals? What retains and grows your faith?

MENTAL HEALTH RELATIVE TO SPIRITUAL HEALTH: Do you think this is a fair assessment of mental health versus spiritual health? Why or why not? What do you think needs to be done to address this problem in society?

YOU ARE WHAT YOU THINK, NOT WHAT YOU THINK YOU ARE: How do you see the relationship between what you think about God and Satan, heaven and hell, and the consequences in life after death? Is that a self-fulfilling prophecy?

DISPOSITION: Take some time to think about your own disposition and how it will look to God at judgment. What would you like to change before that judgment?

EXERCISE YOUR MIND'S EYE

Here's an exercise for you to get acquainted with your mind's eye. Find some quiet time and sit down. Read the comment, then close your eyes and spend some moments thinking about it.

Close your eyes and think what it was like this morning when you first got up. What time was it? What did you do first? Did you eat breakfast, if so, what did you have.

That exercise is based on something very real; you actually had that direct experience, you know that it's true, it's in your memory. That's objective knowledge based on the facts.

Now close your eyes and think about what will happen tomorrow morning when you first get up. What time will it be? What will you do first? Will you eat breakfast, if so, what will you eat?

That exercise is also based on something very real; you know that it will happen with perhaps some minor variation, it's true to the best of your knowledge at this time. It's not yet in your memory but it's just as true as the previous exercise. That's still objective because it's based on very real things that just haven't happened yet. Does the fact that they haven't happened yet make them less real? Is tomorrow just as real as today? Next week? Next year?

Now close your eyes and think about your relationship with your closest loved one; that may be your spouse, parent, child, or friend. What were your last words, what did you talk about? What were you thinking about during that talk? Did your mind go further or hold back things from your talk?

That exercise is also based on reality, it happened, it's in your memory and it's true; you know it. The words are objective but your thoughts are subjective. Are your thoughts any less real and true than your words? Your thoughts are only in your mind and no one else can see or comprehend them but they can get a pretty good idea about what you're thinking by what you say and do. But you can know and think in ways that they'll never be able to discern.

Now close your mind and think about your most knowledgeable subject, whatever that might be. How did you learn it? Where did it come from? What's it based on?

That exercise is also based on reality, your knowledge, experience and memory; you know that it's true. It's all in your mind but it's as real and true as you can possibly know.

Now think about a problem that you can solve with your knowledge, something you have certainty that you can come up with the right solution. What is that solution?

That's still reality, but again it's all still just in your mind. But would your spouse or friend or colleague come up with exactly the same solution that you did if they were presented with the same problem? They don't have your specific knowledge or experience, even though they may be just as knowledgeable about it. You could probably work with them to come up with a solution that you would both agree upon. But what's going on in your mind as you work with them? What will you agree or disagree with?

Now think about a problem that you don't have good knowledge or experience to solve. How would you approach that problem? Would you seek the knowledge and experience of someone that knows more about it? Would you do some research online or in a book? Would you try to come up with the best solution or just leave it to others?

Now you're getting into what is subjective for you. You don't know the solution yourself but you can figure out how to get the right answers. You may have to trust that someone else has the right solution based on their knowledge and experience. You may have to accept their solution based on your trust in them.

The purpose of this exercise is for you to explore the use of your mind's eye. I could go on and on but this shows that things in your mind's eye can be just as real and true as things that have actually happened, that you know are true. They may be objective if you have enough evidence and knowledge about the subject, or they may be subjective if you are thinking about them with less than definitive evidence or knowledge.

That's how we come to knowledge about God and Satan, heaven and hell, life after death and the factors that will determine our outcome. The purpose of this book is to share the evidence and knowledge of others smarter and more knowledgeable than me about these things. I add my own knowledge and experience as a way to convey their knowledge with you that you may not have otherwise considered.

Something to think about!

Other resources to consider:

Eltz, Nicky. *"Get Us Out Of Here!!": Maria Simma Speaks with Nicky Eltz*. DeKalb, IL: Medjugorje Web, 2002. Print.

Peck, M. Scott. *The Road Less Travelled: A New Psychology of Love, Traditional Values and Spiritual Growth*. Second ed. New York: Touchstone, 1998. Print.

St. Thomas Summa Theologica. Web. <http://www.sacred-texts.com/chr/aquinas/summa/>
Remote Viewing. Paul H. Smith, n.d. Web. 10 Nov. 2015 <http://www.rviewer.com/>

CHAPTER 7 – LIFE AFTER DEATH

So the ultimate answer to the purpose and success or failure of our life is found after death. For the secular, life ends at death and the success or failure is relative to human measures – wealth and possessions, accomplishments, reputation, etc. For those with faith in God and life after death in heaven, hell or purgatory, the measure of success or failure is relative to those destinations. Those measures may well be in inverse order to the secular measures; the last shall be first and the first shall be last.

No one sincerely wants to fail because even their shortcomings are directed toward some kind of good or success in their own eyes, even if the rest of us don't see or agree with it. For example, the terrorists see salvation and reward as the outcome of their violence. Death in the cause is success, not failure. As I've said in the book, I don't think people intentionally plan to go to hell. They get there because they pursue other goals that lead them there.

The epitome of success would seem to be immediate entrance into heaven (that's what the terrorists believe they are achieving). If we believed that equally, we too should be willing to make every sacrifice in that cause. We should strive to be perfect in all aspects. We would be saints every day.

So, why aren't we? And, so what if we're not? What difference does it make? That's what this chapter is about – life after death. What's our goal and how do we go about getting there?

IS THERE LIFE AFTER DEATH? What are your thoughts about life after death? How concerned are you? How do those thoughts affect your lifestyle?

DEATH'S COCOON: What are your thoughts about facing death? We know that it will come sooner or later, so how do you prepare for it spiritually? Are you ready for it?

RETIREMENT, DEATH, AND THEN WHAT? Are you planning for retirement? Are you planning for life after death? If so, what are you doing about it? If not, why not?

WHAT ARE THE STANDARDS FOR ENTRY INTO HEAVEN? What do you think are the standards for entry into heaven? Purgatory? Are you preparing to meet those standards?

PATHWAYS THROUGH PURGATORY: How do you understand the pathways through purgatory? How else would you describe it?

GRACE IN OUR LIVES: If you don't understand grace, take some time to learn about it, and then decide how to increase the grace in your own life. It's the coin and measure for your eternal life.

STUCK IN PURGATORY: How do you feel about the possibility that people may become stuck in purgatory? How do you see that playing out in this temporal life?

SUPERNATURAL VISITS: How do you respond to this summary from the book, *Hungry Souls*? Do you find it credible? Why or why not? Have you read about or had other experiences related to supernatural visits?

GET US OUT OF HERE!! Are you aware of other descriptions of visits by souls from purgatory? Have you investigated them? What do you think about purgatory based on these descriptions?

Other resources to consider:

Aardweg, G. J. M. Van Den. *Hungry Souls: Supernatural Visits, Messages, and Warnings from Purgatory*. Charlotte, NC: Saint Benedict, 2009. Print.

Eltz, Nicky. *"Get Us Out Of Here!!": Maria Simma Speaks with Nicky Eltz*. DeKalb, IL: Medjugorje Web, 2002. Print.

Peck, M. Scott. *The Road Less Travelled: A New Psychology of Love, Traditional Values and Spiritual Growth*. Second ed. New York: Touchstone, 1998. Print.

Sister Emmanuel of Medjugorje. *The Amazing Secret of the Souls in Purgatory*. Santa Barbara, CA: Queenship Pub., 1997. Print.

<http://www.mysticsofthechurch.com/2013/10/maria-simma-visits-from-souls-in.html>

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/divine_grace

CHAPTER 8 – MORALITY

In order to have a peaceful society, it must be based on moral values. Everything immoral degrades a society. Civil laws must be based on moral principles, not simply secular ones. Civil laws should simply be codified moral values.

Moral values go beyond just good and bad. They determine a society's character. They determine how people are treated. They determine each persons' freedom and justice. They are essential, not optional.

So the question is, how do we collectively determine the moral values that our society will accept and implement? Our secular forms of government banish all religious basis and determine society's values based on merely relative human terms. Those in power, be they democratic or other forms, make the binding decisions of laws and determine how they are to be enforced.

But the fundamental values of a society come from those in common acceptance by the people. One doesn't practice moral values based on the civil law and its enforcement but on what's within their heart and soul. That's the critical element in today's society; how do people get and understand moral values?

LIFE'S MORAL PATHWAYS: Read and think about the words describing good and evil and choose ones under each heading that best describe your life's path. Do you see things that you would like to change? How would you go about changing your pathway?

Here's a visual way to look at it. Look at the word and mark your choice under the label that fits your answer. It's your own life that you're looking at so be honest with yourself. What does your own pathway look like?

DESCRIPTIVE WORD	NO	NEUTRAL	YES
Admirable			
Benevolent			
Blameless			
Charitable			
Considerate			
Dutiful			
Ethical			
Exemplary			
Generous			
Guiltless			
Honest			
Honorable			
Humane			
Innocent			
Philanthropic			
Praiseworthy			
Pure			
Reputable			
Respectable			
Right			
Self-sacrificing			
Sound			
Uncorrupted			
Unselfish			
Untainted			
Well behaved			
Worthy			
Atrocious			
Base			
Corrupt			
Criminal			
Delinquent			
Depraved			
Destructive			
Disastrous			
Evil			
Foul			
Harmful			
Hateful			
Iniquitous			
Injurious			

DESCRIPTIVE WORD	NO	NEUTRAL	YES
Loathsome			
Low			
Malicious			
Malignant			
Mean			
Obscene			
Offensive			
Repulsive			
Revolting			
Sinful			
Spiteful			
Unpleasant			
Vicious			
Vile			
Wicked			
Wrathful			
Wrong			

GOD’S MORAL GUIDANCE: To readers of faiths other than Jewish or Christian, I mean no disrespect or disagreement because I am not familiar with the sources of your faith. I’m addressing these essays largely to Christians and others who are seeking ways to find God. Think about your own sources for God’s moral guidance. What’s their basis?

OUR MORAL SCALE: How do you feel morality and immorality affect your family, your community, and society as a whole?

VALUE SYSTEMS FOR THE COMMON GOOD: How do you think we could solve some of these common problems of society? Does it include value systems? Why or why not?

SEXUAL MORALITY: Where do you draw the line between moral and immoral sexual activities? What's the basis for that distinction?

THE MORAL CODE – THE CASE AGAINST SEXUAL MISCONDUCT: Obviously, this is a minority opinion in today's social environment, but that doesn't make the essay irrelevant for consideration. Maybe if enough people agree, society will move toward moral values and behaviors. What do you think?

ABORTION: Think about your own experience relative to women who've had a surprise or unwanted pregnancy. How did they handle it and come to a decision to accept and welcome the child versus having the pregnancy terminated? Did they have the support that they needed to make a decision to keep the child? Has it turned out okay?

RELIGIOUS TOLERANCE: Religious beliefs and practices are protected under the Constitution so they should be tolerated and respected whether you agree with them or not. Regardless of which side you are on relative to these issues, do you agree that tolerance of and by both sides is the goal? Why or why not?

Sins, Virtues, and Tales. *Seven Deadly Sins*. N.p., n.d. Web. 10 Nov. 2015.
<http://www.deadlysins.com/>

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

CHAPTER 9 – PEACE

God alone is the source of love, justice and peace. They are not possible without God's intervention. They are gifts and not something that we can earn or deserve in a strictly secular manner. We can choose to accept or reject God's gifts.

Conversely, Satan is the source of hate, violence and war. They are chosen by people in their own lives and then inflict them upon others. Somehow Satan has convinced them that they are good objectives. Peace is not possible as long as people continue to follow Satan.

In order to have peace, we must identify and unmask Satan for what he really is. We must seek and obtain God's grace because he alone can overcome the powers of Satan.

WORLD PEACE: If you are a prayerful person, please take a few moments to pray for world peace and for all the victims of war, persecution, injustice, poverty, and disasters.

ROAD MAP TO PEACE: What do you think it would take to bring peace to the world? What can you do personally to help?

WAR IS IDEOLOGICAL: Do you agree that war is ideological? Why or why not? Do you see Satan in war? How else would you understand the basis for war?

http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/justpeace/documents/rc_pc_justpeace_pr_o_20011004_en.html

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue or grey ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are approximately 20 lines visible. The paper has a slight shadow on the right side, suggesting it's resting on a surface. There is no handwriting or other markings on the paper.

CHAPTER 10 – THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

The Catholic Church is a legacy institution, that is, it's profoundly based on its heritage of over 2,000 years of development, from its foundations in the Jewish traditions and teachings, through its formative days in Christ's own time, through the continuous development of its tenets over the centuries. With a few notable exceptions, it's still today based on the same foundations and principles from its origin. Those principles are immutable through the centuries.

That doesn't mean that it's perfect or without flaws and problems; it's a very human institution, from, by and through fallible human beings. The Church, by definition, is made up of human followers of Jesus Christ, just as the first apostles were common, everyday humans. What makes it more than just human endeavor is that it's based on the gifts of God, primarily, the Son of God, Jesus Christ himself, and renewed constantly by the Holy Spirit. Any true Catholic principle is based on God's word, even though it's developed through human means. That's God's direct way of reaching people, through people.

And so, regardless of your faith, I ask you to consider the foundations of the Catholic Church, and less so what you see and hear about it. Unless you look at the foundations, what you see are the external words and deeds of other human beings. Look deeper than that for the truth about the Church. Look for God in it all.

CATHOLIC SERVICES: Regardless of your faith, what do you know and/or understand about the institutions of the Catholic Church? What's that based on?

MY SOUL AT MASS: If you are Catholic, do you regularly attend Mass? Why or why not? If you do attend Mass, what's on your mind before going to Church, during Mass and afterward? How do you spend your time for that hour or so?

Catechism of the Catholic Church. Second ed. Vatican: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1997. Print
Catholic Answers. N.p., n.d. Web. <http://www.catholic.com/>

Catholic Community Services of Western Washington. N.p., n.d. Web. 10 Nov. 2015.
<http://www.ccsww.org/>.

Catholic Online. N.p., n.d. Web. 10 Nov. 2015. <http://www.catholic.org/>

Catholic School Data | NCEA. N.p., n.d. Web. 10 Nov. 2015. <https://www.ncea.org/data-information/catholic-school-data>.

The Society of St. Vincent De Paul. N.p., n.d. Web. <http://www.svdpusa.org/>.

United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. N.p., n.d. Web. 10 Nov. 2015. <http://usccb.org/>.

CHAPTER 11 - PRAYER

This is just scratching the surface about prayer; just my own thoughts over time. There are countless resources in print, online and in organized classes and retreats. There are also numerous forms of prayer: verbal, silent, meditative, alone or in groups, in community or in cloistered orders, in poem and song.

The key consideration is, just do it! (to borrow a phrase from the commercial world). If you want a healthy spiritual life, just do it! If you need support for anything, just do it! If you love someone and they need your support, just do it! And for our world and all the people in it, just do it! And for the souls in purgatory, just do it!

My own prayers are primarily for all of my loved ones, past and present, alive and deceased. My typical intentions at Mass are for world peace and for all those suffering from war, persecution and disaster, and for the souls in purgatory. The intentions book and Prayers of the Faithful at Mass are for all of the members of our parish and for all the intentions requested, in writing or in silence.

Prayer is personal; each and every person has their own needs and desires, for themselves and for others. Prayer is an act of faith that God hears those needs and desires, and that he will answer them.

Your prayer may be difficult because you don't see or hear or sense in any other way God or Mary or a saint or a friend in front of you on the other side of the conversation. But it's not about who or how anyone is on the other side, it's about what's in your heart while you are praying. That's your own soul that's being affected by your prayer. It's an expression of your faith, hope and love, your desires and your intentions. It's about shaping your own basis for your life.

Prayer is effective because God loves you. He hears your prayer whether it's directed to him or to Mary or to another person and responds based on what you are reflecting in your heart. That doesn't mean that you will see an answer but rest assured, God will answer it in his own way. God wants your needs and desires to be fulfilled but it may or may not be the way you see it. Especially if your desires are not based on God's will but on temptation by Satan.

That's why prayer needs to be silent at times in order to hear God's response. If your heart and intentions are true, you will hear the answer. You can't force it or create your own answer; you must patiently and carefully listen to discern his answer.

THOUGHTS ABOUT PRAYER: What are your thoughts about prayer? What would you add to this description of prayer?

METAPHYSICS OF PRAYER: How do you understand prayer as a link between our physical world and God in the unseen spiritual world?

QUIET PRAYER: How do you listen to God? If you pray regularly, how do you develop your listening skills?

CHRIST'S TEACHING ABOUT PRAYER: Do you use the Bible for prayer? Why or why not? If you do, how do you use it to guide your prayer?

Other resources to consider:

Bible

Catechism of the Catholic Church. Second ed. Vatican: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1997. Print

Catholic Answers. N.p., n.d. Web. <http://www.catholic.com/>

Catholic Online. N.p., n.d. Web. 10 Nov. 2015. <http://www.catholic.org/>

How to Pray the Rosary. N.p., n.d. Web. 10 Nov. 2015. <http://www.rosary-center.org/howto.htm>.

Countless other books and resources, including online

Also, please see the APPENDICES

SURVEY

As a way to more definitively describe your faith, please use the following survey at different stages relative to reading *A Window Into My Soul*; before you read the book, after you read the book, at different times after you've reconsidered or developed your faith.

A = strongly agree; B = agree; C = neutral; D = disagree; E = strongly disagree; F = not applicable.

- | | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. I believe that each person has a soul. | A | B | C | D | E | F |
| 2. I believe that each person's soul will live on after death. | A | B | C | D | E | F |
| 3. I believe that our intellect, memories and will abide in our soul. | A | B | C | D | E | F |
| 4. I believe in a universal creator God. | A | B | C | D | E | F |
| 5. I believe that God is three persons in one being. | A | B | C | D | E | F |
| 6. I believe in God as the Father. | | | | | | |
| 7. I believe in God as the Son. | A | B | C | D | E | F |
| 8. I believe in God as the Holy Spirit. | A | B | C | D | E | F |
| 9. I believe that God plays a direct role in each of our lives. | A | B | C | D | E | F |
| 10. I believe in heaven as God's eternal home. | A | B | C | D | E | F |
| 11. I believe in angels that abide with God in heaven. | A | B | C | D | E | F |
| 12. I believe that God's angels play a direct role in each of our lives. | A | B | C | D | E | F |
| 13. I believe in Satan/Devil. | A | B | C | D | E | F |
| 14. I believe in hell as Satan's eternal home. | A | B | C | D | E | F |
| 15. I believe that Satan plays a direct role in each of our lives. | A | B | C | D | E | F |
| 16. I believe in angels that work with Satan against God. | A | B | C | D | E | F |
| 17. I believe that Satan's angels play a direct role in each of our lives. | A | B | C | D | E | F |
| 18. I believe in purgatory as a stage in preparation for life in heaven. | A | B | C | D | E | F |
| 19. I believe that sin is our thoughts and actions against God. | A | B | C | D | E | F |
| 20. I believe that sin in our lives affects our life after death. | A | B | C | D | E | F |

“

For many years, I would jog a few miles three days a week.

That gave me a lot of time for thinking . . .

which then turned into a few prayers and then more thinking about what I was praying about. I was losing track of some of the thoughts so I started writing them down, just to capture them as the inspiration led me at the time.

This book is based on a collection of those short essays and prayers that I've written over 20 years. Within these pages I express the mysteries of my faith — essentially, I share with the reader the theology and philosophy that was instilled in me as a youth and young man in the 1960's and that has been confirmed in my adult life.

”

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

“Engineering my own Salvation with Fear and Trembling.”

~ Phillipians 2:12

Larry was born in 1941 and raised in Leavenworth, WA until leaving for college. From 1959 to 1964, he attended Seattle University, a Jesuit college, graduating with a Bachelor of Science degree in Civil Engineering. From 1964 to 1975, Larry worked for the US Forest Service and two private engineering companies, surveying, designing and constructing subdivisions, roads and utilities. From 1975 to 2000, he was an engineering and business manager for the City of Bellevue in public works and utilities, retiring December 31, 1999. Since retirement, he's provided consulting services to local public agencies. Larry is a lifetime member of the American Public Works Association where he received a number of recognitions at the state and national levels for his efforts.

Larry's Catholic faith has grown from his early grade and high school years, through a Catholic university including theology and philosophy courses, and serving in various ministries in local parishes for over 50 years. He is currently a Sacristan, Lector and Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion at St. Mary Star of the Sea Parish in Port Townsend, WA.

Larry and Karen, his wife of 53 years, have three children and six grandchildren and reside near Port Townsend. This is his first book, a collection of essays that he's written over the last 20 years.

